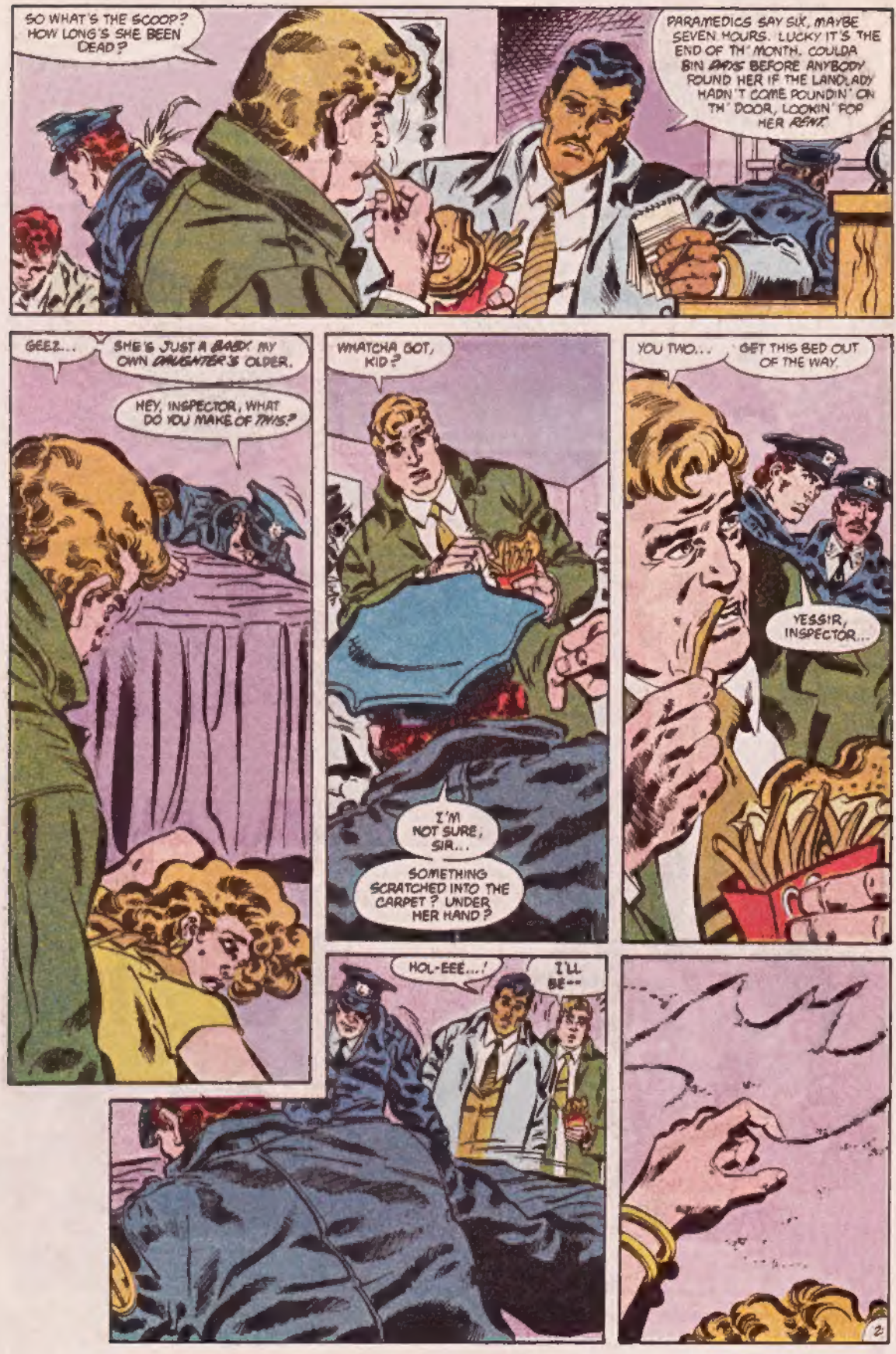
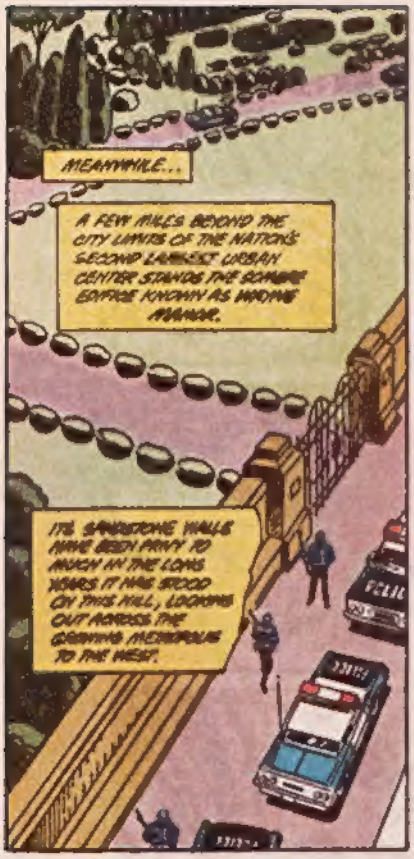
PART THREE OF THREE
THE MANY DEATHS OF THE
BATMAN
BYRNE • APARO • DECARLO
435
JUL 89
US 75¢
CAN 95¢
UK 50p
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
ROUGHER

THE MANY DEATHS OF THE BATMAN

CHAPTER THREE:
THE LAST DEATH OF THE BATMAN
MARY McGINNIS WAS OUT VERY LATE LAST NIGHT. SHE'D FOUND A FRIEND WITH A BIG, BIG BANKROLL AND A GENEROUS MIND.
HE HAD SOME FUNNY IDEAS, BUT MARY DIDN'T MIND. SHE SAW HERSELF SET FOR A FEW DAYS OFF, A FEW EVENINGS ALONE IN HER SMALL ROOM, PEACEFUL, QUIET.
SHE DID NOT SEE THE KIND OF ETERNAL PEACE THE EVENING'S END WOULD BRING. DID NOT FORESEE CHOKING OUT THE LAST BREATHS OF HER SHORT, SAD LIFE AS THE FIRST RAYS OF A DISTANT DAWN PEEKED IN AROUND THE EDGES OF HER WINDOWSHADE.

BATMAN 435 Published monthly by DC Comics Inc., 666 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10103. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to BATMAN, DC Comics Subscriptions, P.O. Box 0528, Baldwin, NY 11510. Annual subscription rate $9.00, Canada $14.00, all other foreign $21.00. U.S. funds only. Copyright © 1989 DC Comics Inc. All Rights Reserved. The stories, characters and incidents mentioned in this magazine are entirely fictional. All characters featured in this issue and distinctive likenesses thereof are trademarks of DC Comics Inc. Advertising Representative: Print Advertising Representatives, 355 Lexington Avenue, New York, NY 10017 (212) 391-1400. Printed in U.S.A.
DC Comics Inc. A Warner Communications Company


SO WHAT'S THE SCOOP? HOW LONG'S SHE BEEN DEAD?
PARAMEDICS SAY SIX, MAYBE SEVEN HOURS. LUCKY IT'S THE END OF TH' MONTH. COULDA BIN DAYS BEFORE ANYBODY FOUND HER IF THE LANDLADY HADN'T COME POUNDIN' ON TH' DOOR, LOOKIN' FOR HER RENT.
GEEZ...
SHE'S JUST A BABY. MY OWN DAUGHTER'S OLDER.
HEY, INSPECTOR, WHAT DO YOU MAKE OF THIS?
WHATCHA GOT, KID?
I'M NOT SURE, SIR...
SOMETHING SCRATCHED INTO THE CARPET? UNDER HER HAND?
YOU TWO...
GET THIS BED OUT OF THE WAY.
YESSIR, INSPECTOR...
HOL-EEE...!
I'LL BE--
2

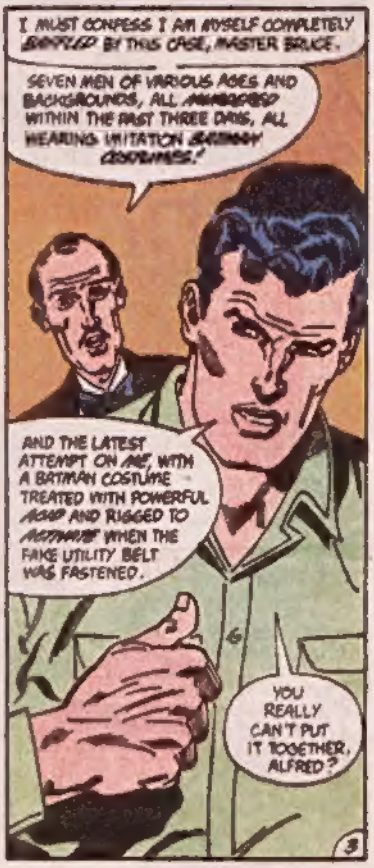

MEANWHILE...
A FEW MILES BEYOND THE CITY LIMITS OF THE NATION'S SECOND LARGEST URBAN CENTER STANDS THE SOMBER EDIFICE KNOWN AS WAYNE MANOR.
ITS SANDSTONE WALLS HAVE SEEN PRIVY TO MUCH IN THE LONG YEARS IT HAS STOOD ON THIS HILL, LOOKING OUT ACROSS THE GLOWING METROPOLIS TO THE WEST.

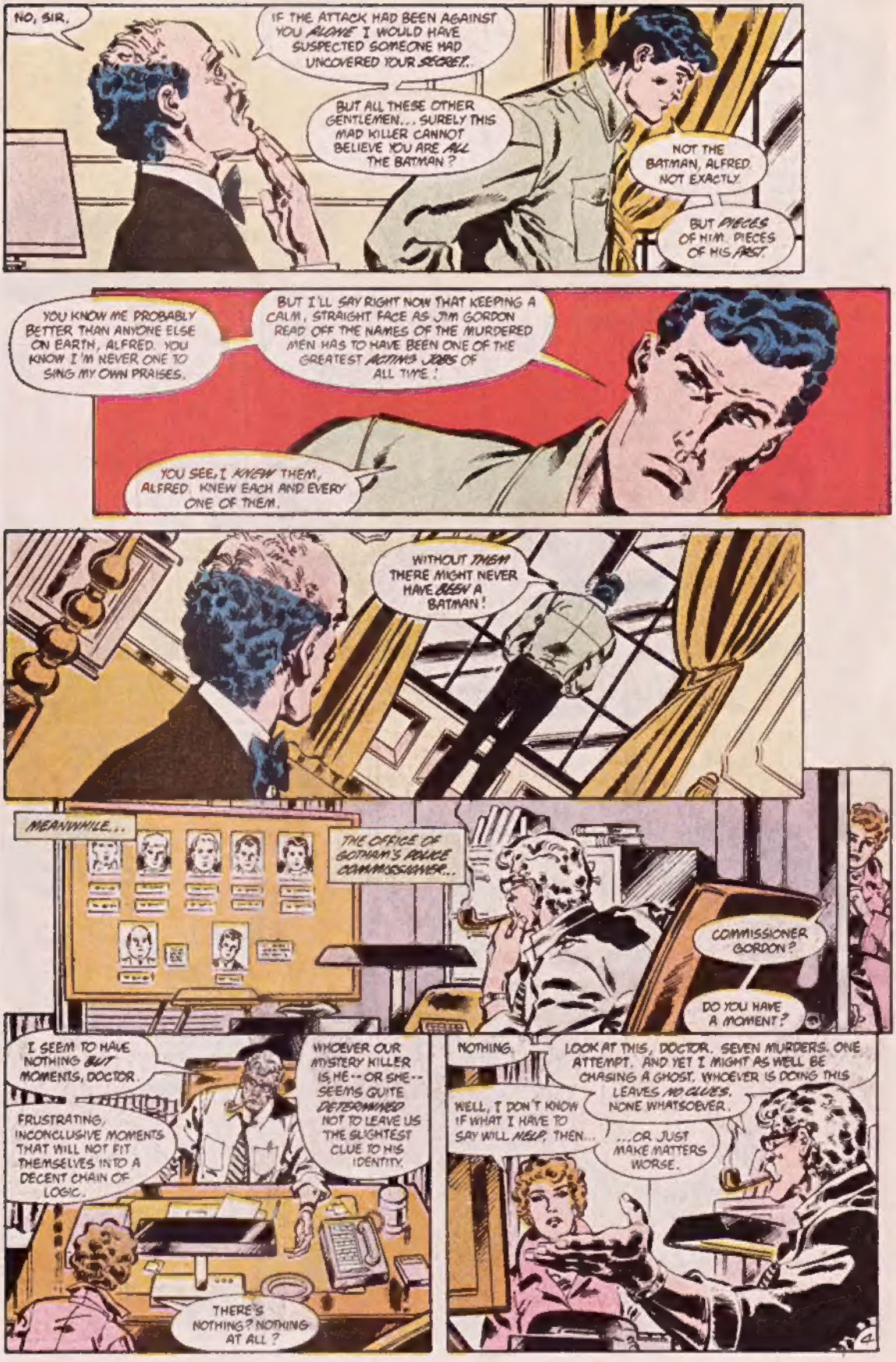
YET OF ALL THE THINGS THE MANSION MIGHT HAVE KNOWN, THERE HAS NEVER BEEN A SECRET SO GREAT AS THE ONE EMBODIED BY THE LONELY FIGURE WHO NOW STANDS IN MUTE FRUSTRATION AT THE DISTANT SKYLINE.
I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT CARE FOR A SPOT OF LUNCH, MASTER BRUCE.

THANK YOU, ALFRED.
I'M AFRAID I'M NOT VERY HUNGRY JUST NOW. ARE THE POLICE STILL DOWNSTAIRS?
YES, SIR.
THE MAIN HALL LOOKS RATHER LIKE A POLICEMAN'S CONVENTION OF SOME SORT. THERE MUST BE A DOZEN OF THEM, LOUNGING ABOUT.

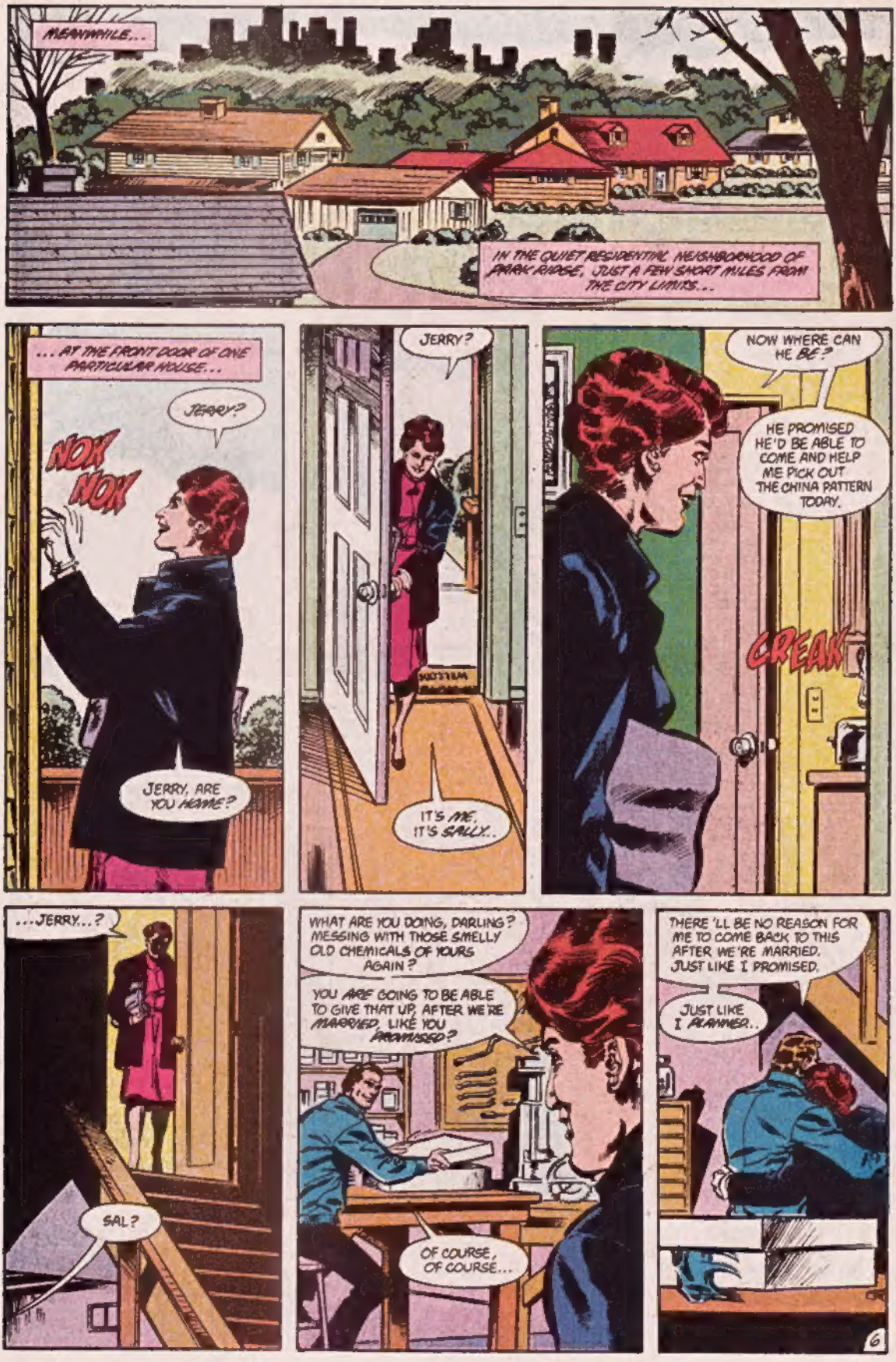
THIS IS MADNESS! MADNESS!
AT THIS VERY MOMENT THIS INSANE KILLER MAY BE PLOTTING HIS NEXT MOVE -- EVEN MAKING HIS NEXT MOVE.
AND THERE'S NOTHING I CAN DO ABOUT IT AS LONG AS GOTHAM'S FINEST ARE SO INTENT ON ARRESTING ME!

DO I UNDERSTAND YOU TO MEAN YOU THINK YOU KNOW WHO THIS KILLER MIGHT BE, SIR?
NOT WHO, ALFRED. I'LL NEED MORE DATA BEFORE I CAN MAKE A GUESS AT WHO.
BUT I KNOW WHY. I'M ALMOST CERTAIN I KNOW WHY, AND KNOWING WHY IS HALF THE BATTLE.


I MUST CONFESS I AM MYSELF COMPLETELY BAFFLED BY THIS CASE, MASTER BRUCE.
SEVEN MEN OF VARIOUS AGES AND BACKGROUNDS, ALL MURDERED WITHIN THE PAST THREE DAYS, ALL WEARING IMITATION BATMAN COSTUMES!
AND THE LATEST ATTEMPT ON ME, WITH A BATMAN COSTUME TREATED WITH POWERFUL ACID AND RIGGED TO ACTIVATE WHEN THE FAKE UTILITY BELT WAS FASTENED.
YOU REALLY CAN'T PUT IT TOGETHER, ALFRED?

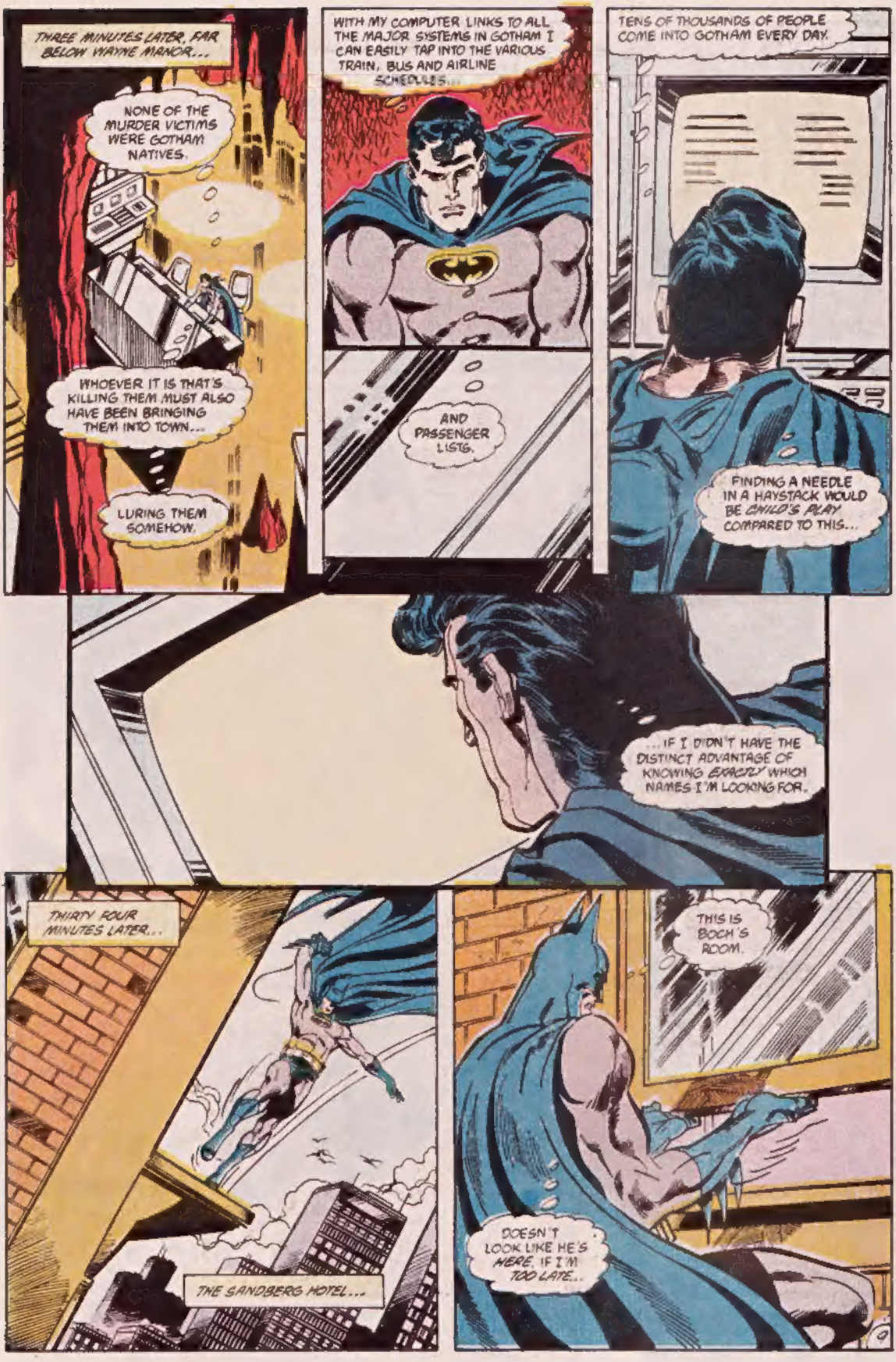

NO, SIR.
IF THE ATTACK HAD BEEN AGAINST YOU ALONE I WOULD HAVE SUSPECTED SOMEONE HAD UNCOVERED YOUR SECRET.
BUT ALL THESE OTHER GENTLEMEN... SURELY THIS MAD KILLER CANNOT BELIEVE YOU ARE ALL THE BATMAN?
NOT THE BATMAN, ALFRED. NOT EXACTLY.
BUT PIECES OF HIM. PIECES OF HIS PAST.
YOU KNOW ME PROBABLY BETTER THAN ANYONE ELSE ON EARTH, ALFRED. YOU KNOW I'M NEVER ONE TO SING MY OWN PRAISES.
BUT I'LL SAY RIGHT NOW THAT KEEPING A CALM, STRAIGHT FACE AS JIM GORDON READ OFF THE NAMES OF THE MURDERED MEN HAS TO HAVE BEEN ONE OF THE GREATEST ACTING JOBS OF ALL TIME!
YOU SEE, I KNEW THEM, ALFRED. KNEW EACH AND EVERY ONE OF THEM.
WITHOUT THEM THERE MIGHT NEVER HAVE BEEN A BATMAN!
MEANWHILE...
THE OFFICE OF GOTHAM'S POLICE COMMISSIONER...
COMMISSIONER GORDON?
DO YOU HAVE A MOMENT?
I SEEM TO HAVE NOTHING BUT MOMENTS, DOCTOR.
FRUSTRATING, INCONCLUSIVE MOMENTS THAT WILL NOT FIT THEMSELVES INTO A DECENT CHAIN OF LOGIC.
WHOEVER OUR MYSTERY KILLER IS, HE -- OR SHE -- SEEMS QUITE DETERMINED NOT TO LEAVE US THE SLIGHTEST CLUE TO HIS IDENTITY.
THERE'S NOTHING? NOTHING AT ALL?
NOTHING.
LOOK AT THIS, DOCTOR. SEVEN MURDERS. ONE ATTEMPT. AND YET I MIGHT AS WELL BE CHASING A GHOST. WHOEVER IS DOING THIS LEAVES NO CLUES. NONE WHATSOEVER.
WELL, I DON'T KNOW IF WHAT I HAVE TO SAY WILL HELP, THEN...
...OR JUST MAKE MATTERS WORSE.

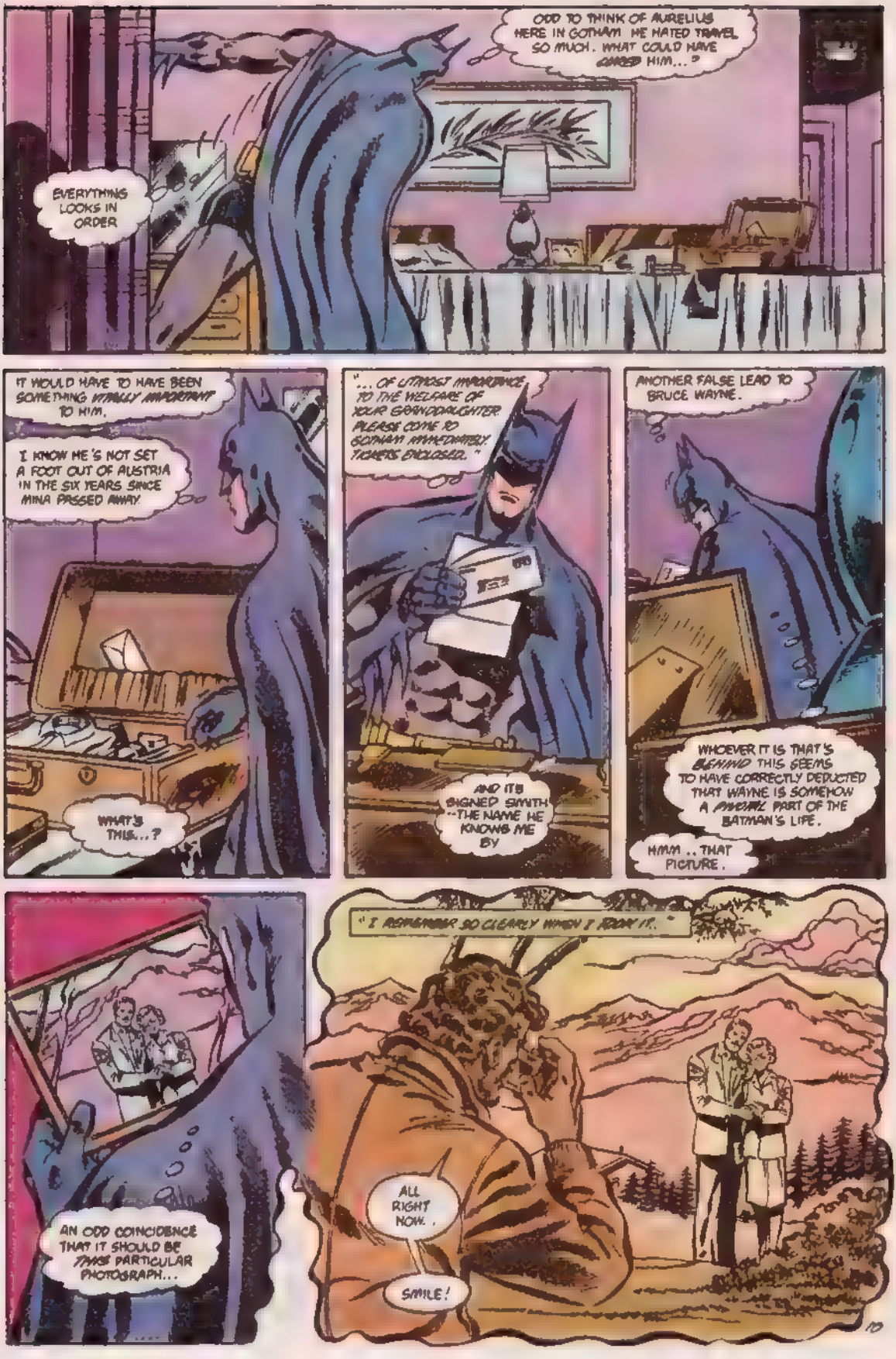
SPARE ME THE CYNICUS PRONOUNCEMENTS, DOCTOR. WHAT HAVE YOU GOT?
WELL, IT'S THE SECOND BAT-KILLING. STONE, THE DEMOLITIONS EXPERT WHO WAS BLOWN UP ON HIS HOTEL TERRACE.
I JUST GOT FINISHED READING THE DETAILED REPORT ON WHAT WAS LEFT OF THE BODY, AND THERE'S JUST A HINT OF EVIDENCE THAT HE MIGHT HAVE ALREADY BEEN DEAD WHEN HE WAS... EXPLODED.
ALREADY DEAD?
YES, IT IS ODD, TOO. I MEAN, WE DIDN'T HAVE VERY MUCH TO GO ON, BUT...
WELL, IN THE CASE OF ALL THE OTHERS, THE CAUSE OF DEATH WAS JUST WHAT IT APPEARED TO BE. LASALLE WAS BEATEN AND CRUCIFIED. JENNER DROWNED. IF THE ATTEMPT ON BRUCE WAYNE HAD BEEN SUCCESSFUL...
BUT STONE'S BODY--THE PIECES OF IT WE FOUND--HAD BEEN DEAD FOR SEVERAL DAYS WHEN IT WAS EXPLODED.
ALREADY DEAD. ALREADY DEAD.
WHAT DOES THAT MEAN? WHAT COULD IT MEAN?
IS IT POSSIBLE SOMEONE IS PLAYING A GAME OF "LEAF IN THE FOREST" WITH US?
A... WHAT?
"LEAF IN THE FOREST," DOCTOR.
IT'S AN OLD CONCEPT--TO HIDE A LEAF, YOU PUT IT IN A FOREST, HIDE A PLAYING CARD IN A DECK, HIDE A BOOK IN A LIBRARY...
WHAT WE MAY HAVE HERE IS ONE SCAPEGOAT VICTIM WHOSE DEATH IS BEING HIDDEN IN THE MIDST OF ALL THESE OTHERS. WHILE WE WASTE TIME SEARCHING FOR A CONNECTION BETWEEN THE MURDERED MEN, THE REAL MOTIVE AND--IF YOU WILL--THE REAL MURDER SLIPS PAST US.
BUT... THE BATMAN COSTUMES?
WINDOW DRESSING?
A NICE, BIZARRE TOUCH TO TAKE US EVEN FURTHER OFF THE PROPER TRAIL. AFTER ALL, WHEN THE FIRST DEAD "BATMAN" WAS DISCOVERED THE WHOLE CITY WENT INTO MOURNING--THOSE WHO WEREN'T CELEBRATING. EITHER WAY IT THREW US ALL OFF BALANCE.
AND WHILE WE WERE RUNNING AROUND FOLLOWING ALL THESE FALSE LEADS...
JEAN...WHO'S IN CHARGE OF THE STONE PART OF THE BAT-KILLING INVESTIGATION? JURGENS?
TELL HIM TO PULL OUT ALL THE STOPS ON THAT ONE. FIND OUT EVERYTHING ABOUT STONE. FRIENDS. ENEMIES. ALL HIS MOVEMENTS AND THEIRS.
WE MAY HAVE FOUND THE PATH TO OUR KILLER...
5


MEANWHILE...
IN THE QUIET RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOOD OF PARK RIDGE, JUST A FEW SHORT MILES FROM THE CITY LIMITS...
...AT THE FRONT DOOR OF ONE PARTICULAR HOUSE...
JERRY?
NOK NOK
JERRY, ARE YOU HOME?
JERRY?
IT'S ME, IT'S SALLY..
NOW WHERE CAN HE BE?
HE PROMISED HE'D BE ABLE TO COME AND HELP ME PICK OUT THE CHINA PATTERN TODAY.
CREAK
...JERRY...?
SAL?
WHAT ARE YOU DOING, DARLING? MESSING WITH THOSE SMELLY OLD CHEMICALS OF YOURS AGAIN?
YOU ARE GOING TO BE ABLE TO GIVE THAT UP, AFTER WE'RE MARRIED, LIKE YOU PROMISED?
OF COURSE, OF COURSE...
THERE'LL BE NO REASON FOR ME TO COME BACK TO THIS AFTER WE'RE MARRIED. JUST LIKE I PROMISED.
JUST LIKE I PLANNED..
6

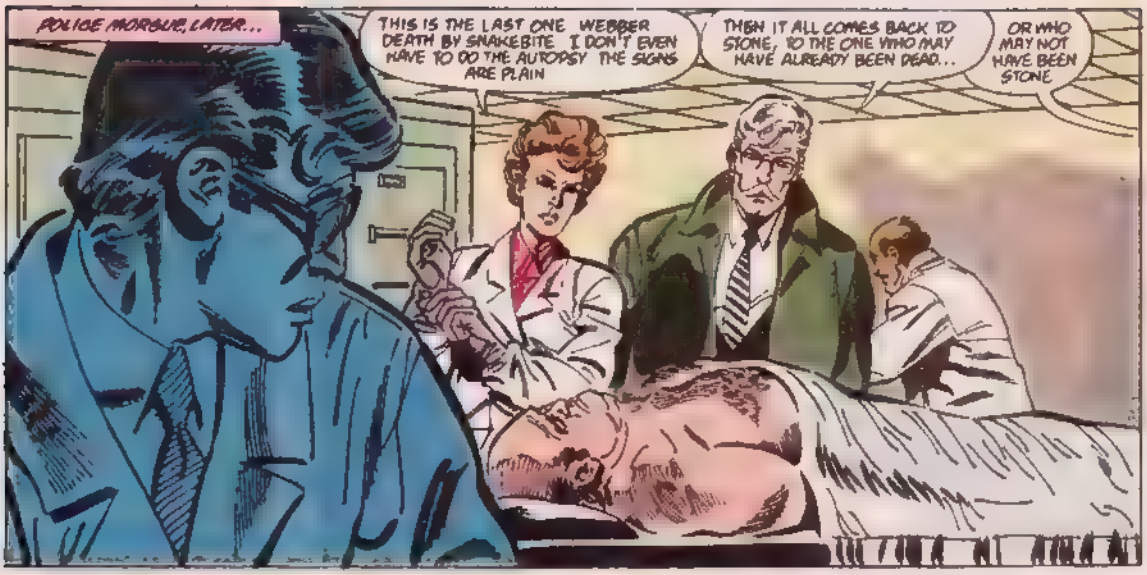
MEANWHILE...
THIS HAS GONE ON LONG ENOUGH.
I'VE GOT TO GET DOWN TO THE LIBRARY... THE ACCESS TO THE BATCAVE.
WE'RE GOING TO HAVE TO FIND SOMETHING TO DISTRACT THOSE POLICEMEN DOWNSTAIRS.
BUT, WHAT, SIR?
COMMISSIONER GORDON ORDERED THEM TO ARREST YOU... AND MADE IT QUITE CLEAR ANYONE WHO WAS THE SLIGHTEST BIT DERELICT IN THAT DUTY WOULD FIND HIMSELF WORKING AS A METER MAID...
NEVERTHELESS...
I HAVE TO GET PAST THOSE POLICEMEN. I HAVE TO GET TO THE BATCAVE. THERE ARE LIVES AT RISK. PEOPLE WHO NEED MY PROTECTION.
NOT EVEN MY SECRET IDENTITY IS SUFFICIENTLY VALUABLE THAT I CAN RISK MORE DEATHS JUST TO PRESERVE IT.
IF IT COMES DOWN TO IT, I'M GOING TO WALK RIGHT PAST THOSE POLICEMEN, AND THEY CAN FOLLOW ME TO THE BATCAVE IF THEY HAVE TO!
I'M SURE THAT WILL NOT BE NECESSARY, SIR.
I BELIEVE THERE IS SOMETHING I CAN DO. JUST GIVE ME FIFTEEN MINUTES.
ALL RIGHT, ALFRED. BUT NOT ONE SECOND LONGER...
"THERE'S TOO MUCH AT STAKE..."
OH DEAR, OH DEAR...
IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME SINCE I'VE SEEN MASTER BRUCE IN SUCH A STATE!
7

I ONLY HOPE THIS WORKS.
I WAS PLANNING TO SERVE THIS ROAST FOR SUNDAY DINNER...
I HAVEN'T USED THIS MICROWAVE OVEN MORE THAN TWICE IN THE THREE YEARS WE'VE HAD THE WRETCHED THING...
I CERTAINLY NEVER EXPECTED TO BE USING IT TO DESTROY SUCH A SPLENDID CUT OF LAMB...
BEEP BEEP BEEP
ELEVEN MINUTES LATER...
MAN O MAN, WHAT IS THAT SMELL?
MY MOUTH'S WATERIN' ENOUGH T' DROWN ME!
GOOD AFTERNOON, OFFICERS.
I WONDER IF I MIGHT OFFER YOU A SPOT OF LUNCH?
HEY, YOU DON'T HAVE TO ASK ME TWICE!
WHATCHA COOKIN', PAL? SMELLS DELICIOUS!
HEY, HOLD IT! ARE YOU GUYS GOING?
GORDON'LL HAVE US ROASTED IF WE LEAVE...
I'M NOT SUGGESTING YOU LEAVE, OFFICER. MERELY TRANSFER YOUR GUARD POSTS TO THE KITCHEN.
YEAH...
C'MON, MORRIE, IT'S NOT LIKE WE'RE RUNNIN' OFF T' ARCADIA OR SOMETHIN'!
I DUNNO...
YEAH! COME ON, MORRIE!
MAY I REMIND YOU OF YOUR COMPANIONS OUTSIDE?
I DOUBT THAT ANYONE WILL BE ABLE TO REACH THE HOUSE WITH THEM PATROLLING THE GROUNDS.
BRILLIANT, OLD FRIEND.
BRILLIANT.

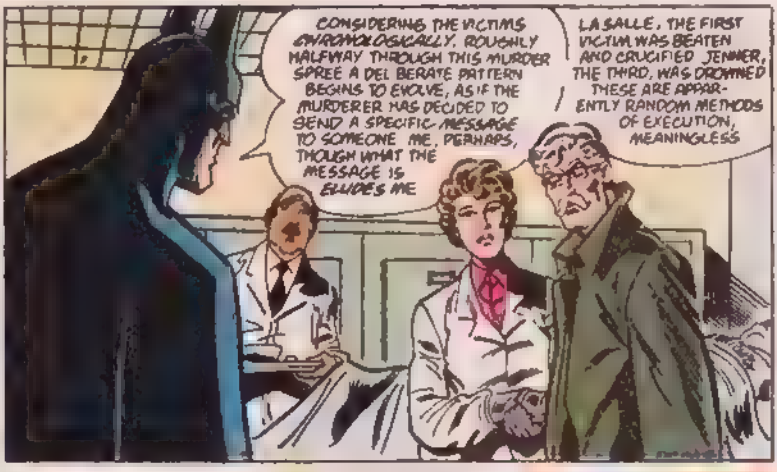

THREE MINUTES LATER, FAR BELOW WAYNE MANOR...
NONE OF THE MURDER VICTIMS WERE GOTHAM NATIVES.
WHOEVER IT IS THAT'S KILLING THEM MUST ALSO HAVE BEEN BRINGING THEM INTO TOWN...
LURING THEM SOMEHOW.
WITH MY COMPUTER LINKS TO ALL THE MAJOR SYSTEMS IN GOTHAM I CAN EASILY TAP INTO THE VARIOUS TRAIN, BUS AND AIRLINE SCHEDULES...
AND PASSENGER LISTS.
TENS OF THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE COME INTO GOTHAM EVERY DAY.
FINDING A NEEDLE IN A HAYSTACK WOULD BE CHILD'S PLAY COMPARED TO THIS...
...IF I DIDN'T HAVE THE DISTINCT ADVANTAGE OF KNOWING EXACTLY WHICH NAMES I'M LOOKING FOR.
THIRTY FOUR MINUTES LATER...
THE SANDBERG HOTEL...
THIS IS BOCH'S ROOM.
DOESN'T LOOK LIKE HE'S HERE. IF I'M TOO LATE...

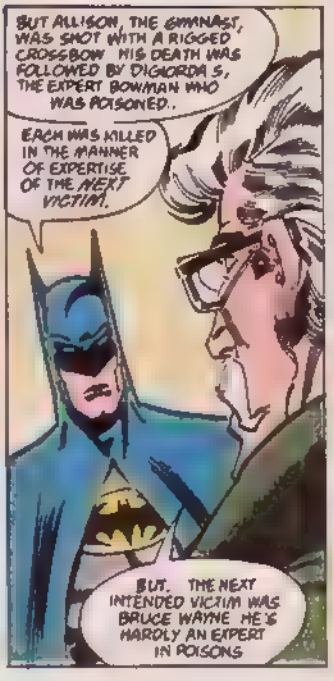

ODD TO THINK OF AURELIUS HERE IN GOTHAM. HE HATED TRAVEL SO MUCH. WHAT COULD HAVE CAUSED HIM...?
EVERYTHING LOOKS IN ORDER
IT WOULD HAVE TO HAVE BEEN SOMETHING VITALLY IMPORTANT TO HIM.
I KNOW HE'S NOT SET A FOOT OUT OF AUSTRIA IN THE SIX YEARS SINCE MINA PASSED AWAY
WHAT'S THIS...?
"... OF UTMOST IMPORTANCE TO THE WELFARE OF YOUR GRANDDAUGHTER. PLEASE COME TO GOTHAM IMMEDIATELY. TICKETS ENCLOSED."
AND IT'S SIGNED SMYTH --THE NAME HE KNOWS ME BY
ANOTHER FALSE LEAD TO BRUCE WAYNE.
WHOEVER IT IS THAT'S BEHIND THIS SEEMS TO HAVE CORRECTLY DEDUCTED THAT WAYNE IS SOMEHOW A PIVOTAL PART OF THE BATMAN'S LIFE.
HMM.. THAT PICTURE.
AN ODD COINCIDENCE THAT IT SHOULD BE THAT PARTICULAR PHOTOGRAPH...
"I REMEMBER SO CLEARLY WHEN I TOOK IT."
ALL RIGHT NOW.
SMILE!

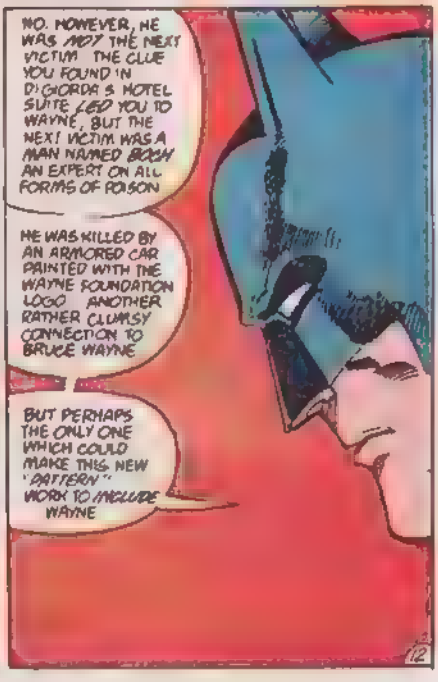
"MINA AND AURELIUS BOCH WERE A WONDERFUL COUPLE KIND GENTLE THEY REMINDED ME OF HOW I THOUGHT MY PARENTS MIGHT HAVE BEEN AT A SIMILAR AGE IT PROMPTED ME TO MAKE TO RECEIVE THEM, EVEN A LITTLE ..
THERE, YOU SEE, HERR SMITH ? IT DOES NOT HURT TO RELAX A LITTLE, SOMETIMES.
I KNOW THAT, MINA BUT I STILL HAVE
SO MUCH TO LEARN. I KNOW I KNOW AND I WILL TEACH YOU
IT HAS BEEN NEARLY EIGHT YEARS SINCE WE LAST HEARD FROM OUR SON, GUSTAVE THE FALLING OUT BETWEEN US WAS VERY BAD, VERY BAD.
I HAD VERY MUCH HOPE HE WOULD FOLLOW IN MY FOOTSTEPS, BUT NOW I SEE THAT CANNOT BE SO.
THUS, I AM HAPPY TO HAND ON TO YOU ALL THE KNOWLEDGE I HAVE COLLECTED OVER THE YEARS OF MY ASSOCIATION WITH INTERPOL
I ONLY HOPE YOU CAN PUT IT TO GOOD AND PROPER USE.
OH I WILL, HERR BOCH.
I PROMISE YOU I WILL.
HE TAUGHT ME EVERYTHING HE KNEW ABOUT THE FINE ART OF TOXICOLOGY HOW TO RECOGNIZE THE MOST INSIDIOUS POISONS FROM THE TINIEST HINTS
THE MEREST TRACE ..
THIS IS THE ROOM OFFICER
OH!
TH BATMAN !?!
...OR ANOTHER JOKER DRESSED UP AS HIM..?
NO, I'M REALLY THE BATMAN, OFFICERS
MR BOCH IS AN ACQUAINTANCE OF MINE I WAS HOPING TO MEET WITH HIM HERE WHY ARE YOU HERE...?
WELL, I HOPE HE WASN'T TOO GOOD A BUDDY OF YOURS, BATMAN
THE ONLY PLACE YOU'LL BE MEET N ' WITH MR BOCH NOW IS TH MORGUE
HE WAS KILLED YESTERDAY IT TOOK US TILL NOW TO TRACK DOWN WHERE HE WAS STAYING.
11

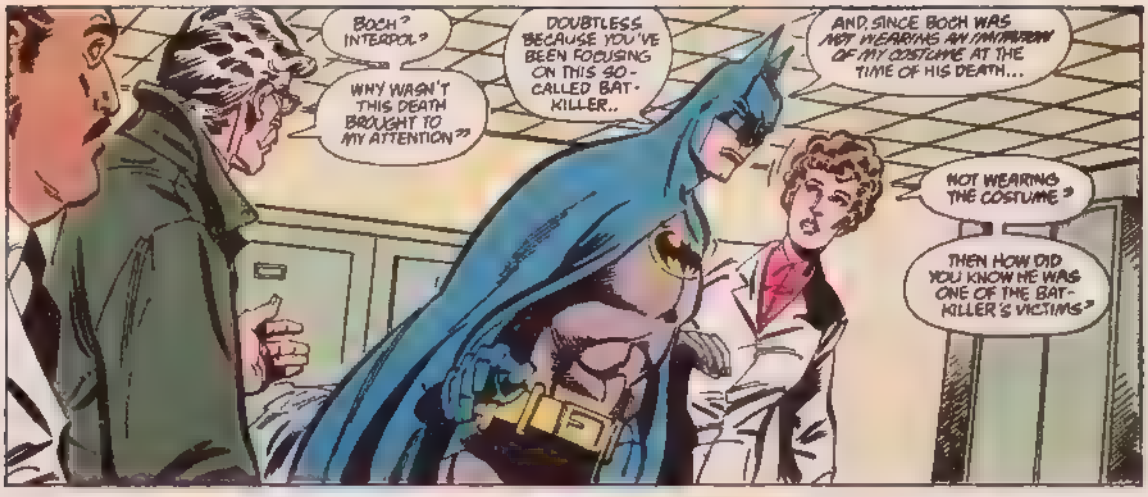

POLICE MORGUE, LATER...
THIS IS THE LAST ONE WEBBER DEATH BY SNAKEBITE I DON'T EVEN HAVE TO DO THE AUTOPSY THE SIGNS ARE PLAIN
THEN IT ALL COMES BACK TO STONE, TO THE ONE WHO MAY HAVE ALREADY BEEN DEAD..
OR WHO MAY NOT HAVE BEEN STONE

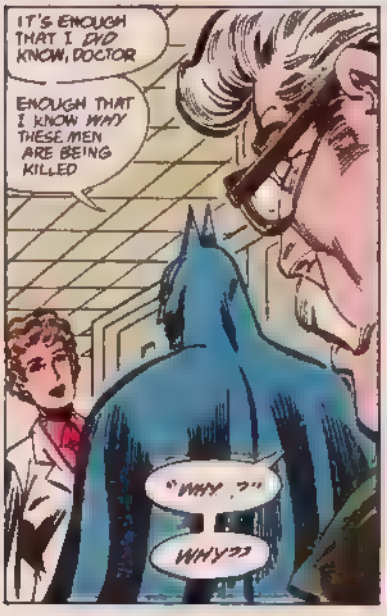
BATMAN!
WHAT DO YOU MEAN... "NOT STONE?"
IT'S THE OTHER PIECE THAT DOESN'T MATCH THE SHAPE OF THE REST OF THE PUZZLE, COMMISSIONER.
IN ADDITION TO BEING ALREADY DEAD AT THE TIME-- YES, I'VE READ YOUR REPORT, DOCTOR-- STONE WAS THE ONLY ONE KILLED IN THE MANNER OF HIS EXPERTISE.

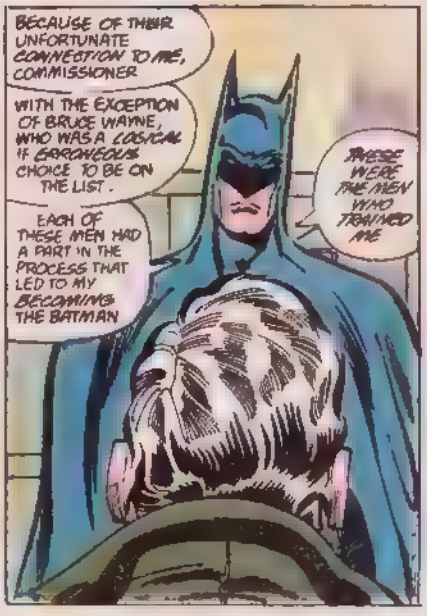

CONSIDERING THE VICTIMS CHRONOLOGICALLY, ROUGHLY HALFWAY THROUGH THIS MURDER SPREE A DELIBERATE PATTERN BEGINS TO EVOLVE, AS IF THE MURDERER HAS DECIDED TO SEND A SPECIFIC MESSAGE TO SOMEONE ME, PERHAPS, THOUGH WHAT THE MESSAGE IS ELUDES ME
LA SALLE, THE FIRST VICTIM WAS BEATEN AND CRUCIFIED JENNER, THE THIRD, WAS DROWNED THESE ARE APPARENTLY RANDOM METHODS OF EXECUTION, MEANINGLESS


BUT ALLISON, THE GYMNAST, WAS SHOT WITH A RIGGED CROSSBOW HIS DEATH WAS FOLLOWED BY DIGIORDA'S, THE EXPERT BOWMAN WHO WAS POISONED.
EACH WAS KILLED IN THE MANNER OF EXPERTISE OF THE NEXT VICTIM.
BUT, THE NEXT INTENDED VICTIM WAS BRUCE WAYNE HE'S HARDLY AN EXPERT IN POISONS

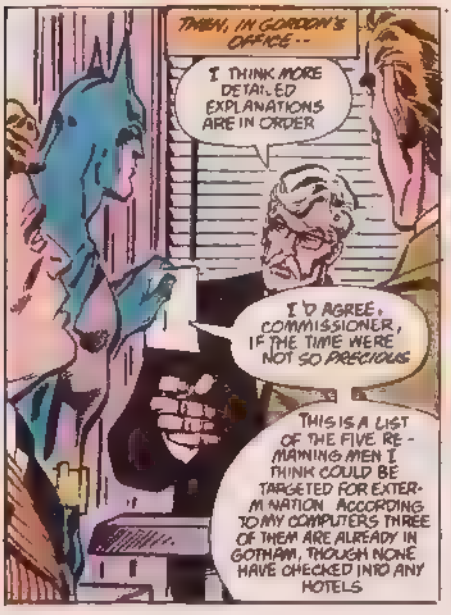

NO. HOWEVER, HE WAS NOT THE NEXT VICTIM THE CLUE YOU FOUND IN DIGIORDA'S HOTEL SUITE LED YOU TO WAYNE, BUT THE NEXT VICTIM WAS A MAN NAMED BOOTH AN EXPERT ON ALL FORMS OF POISON
HE WAS KILLED BY AN ARMORED CAR PAINTED WITH THE WAYNE FOUNDATION LOGO ANOTHER RATHER CLUMSY CONNECTION TO BRUCE WAYNE
BUT PERHAPS THE ONLY ONE WHICH COULD MAKE THIS NEW "PATTERN" WORK TO INCLUDE WAYNE

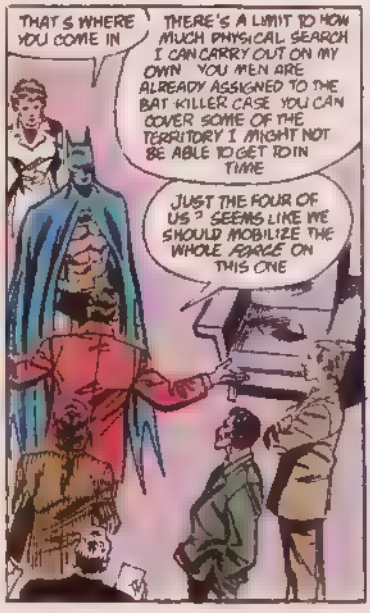

BOCH? INTERPOL?
WHY WASN'T THIS DEATH BROUGHT TO MY ATTENTION?
DOUBTLESS BECAUSE YOU'VE BEEN FOCUSING ON THIS SO-CALLED BAT-KILLER..
AND SINCE BOCH WAS NOT WEARING ANY PART OF MY COSTUME AT THE TIME OF HIS DEATH...
NOT WEARING THE COSTUME?
THEN HOW DID YOU KNOW HE WAS ONE OF THE BAT-KILLER'S VICTIMS?


IT'S ENOUGH THAT I DID KNOW, DOCTOR
ENOUGH THAT I KNOW WHY THESE MEN ARE BEING KILLED
"WHY..?"
WHY?"

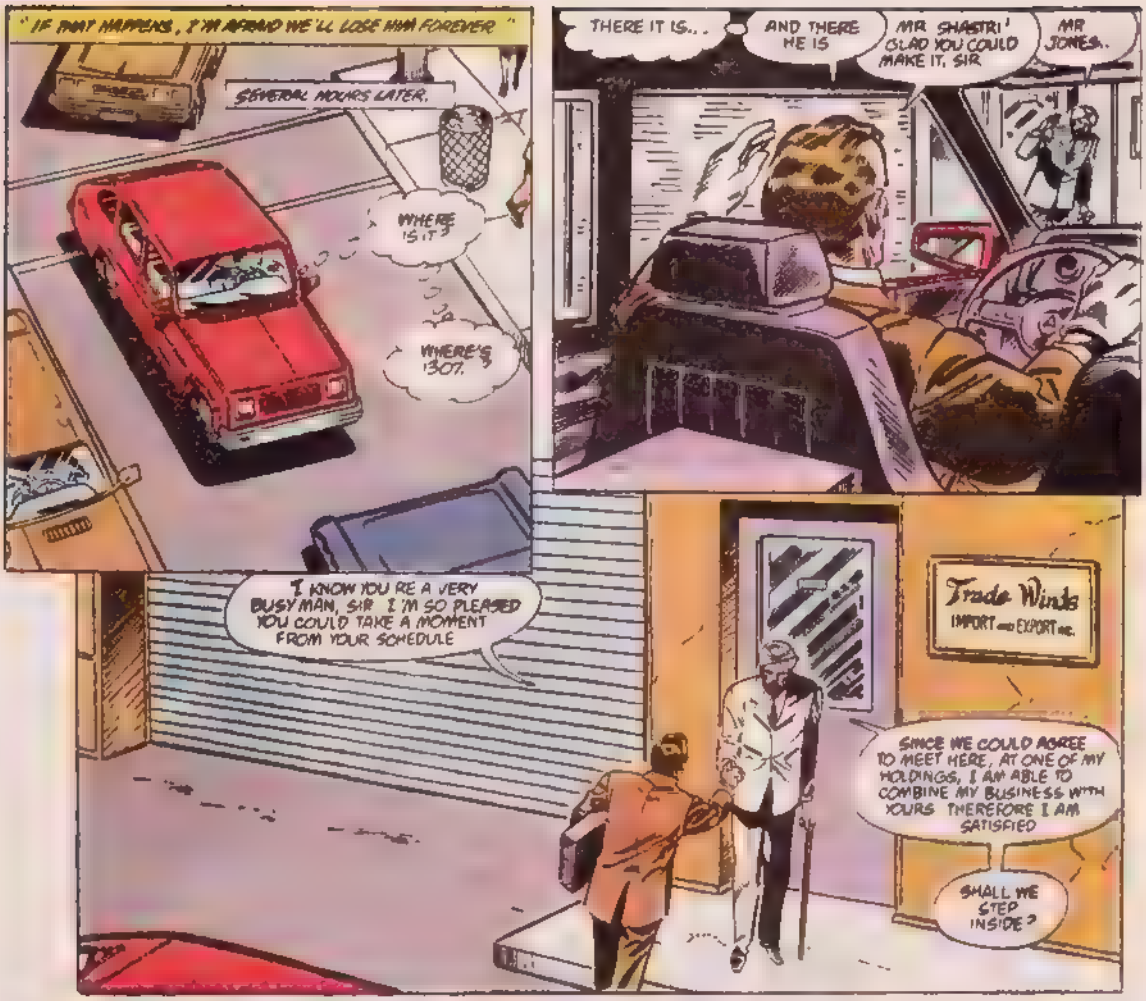

BECAUSE OF THEIR UNFORTUNATE CONNECTION TO ME, COMMISSIONER
WITH THE EXCEPTION OF BRUCE WAYNE, WHO WAS A LOGICAL IF ERRONEOUS CHOICE TO BE ON THE LIST.
EACH OF THESE MEN HAD A PART IN THE PROCESS THAT LED TO MY BECOMING THE BATMAN
THESE WERE THE MEN WHO TRAINED ME

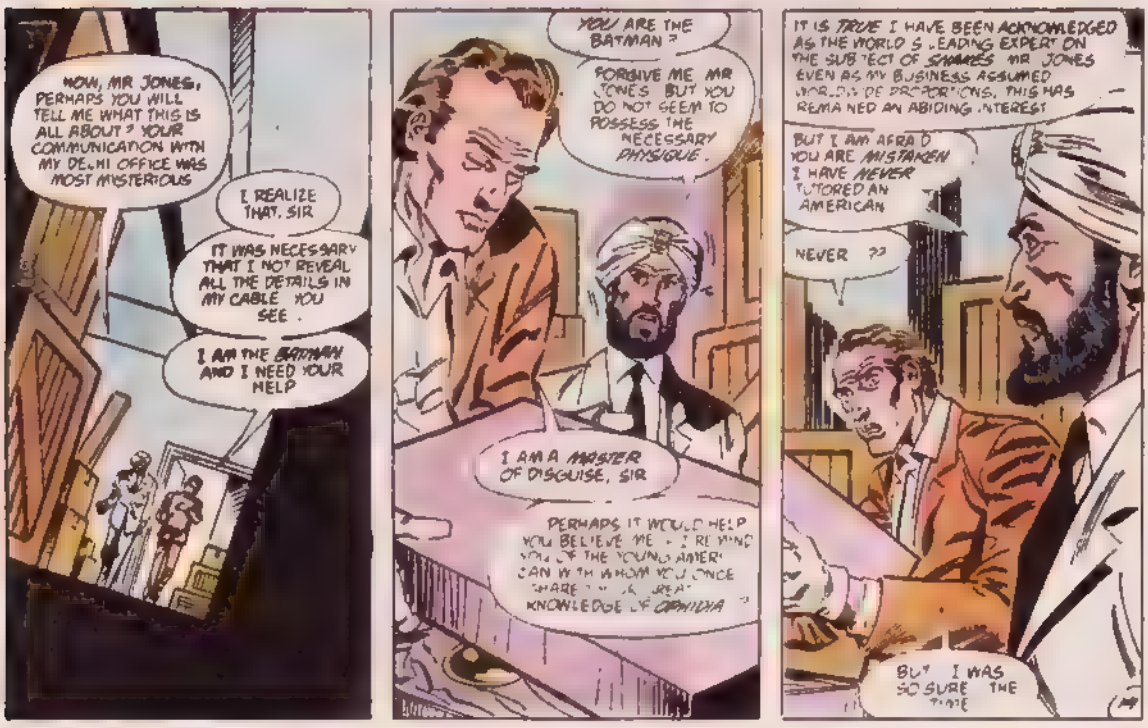
SOMEONE HAS CLEARLY DISCOVERED THIS.
AND NOW, FOR THIS PART IN MY GENESIS, THESE OTHERWISE INNOCENT INDIVIDUALS ARE BEING MADE TO PAY WITH THEIR LIVES!


THEN, IN GORDON'S OFFICE..
I THINK MORE DETAILED EXPLANATIONS ARE IN ORDER
I'D AGREE, COMMISSIONER, IF THE TIME WERE NOT SO PRECIOUS
THIS IS A LIST OF THE FIVE REMAINING MEN I THINK COULD BE TARGETED FOR EXTERMINATION ACCORDING TO MY COMPUTERS THREE OF THEM ARE ALREADY IN GOTHAM, THOUGH NONE HAVE CHECKED INTO ANY HOTELS


THAT'S WHERE YOU COME IN
THERE'S A LIMIT TO HOW MUCH PHYSICAL SEARCH I CAN CARRY OUT ON MY OWN YOU MEN ARE ALREADY ASSIGNED TO THE BAT KILLER CASE YOU CAN COVER SOME OF THE TERRITORY I MIGHT NOT BE ABLE TO GET TO IN TIME
JUST THE FOUR OF US? SEEMS LIKE WE SHOULD MOBILIZE THE WHOLE FORCE ON THIS ONE

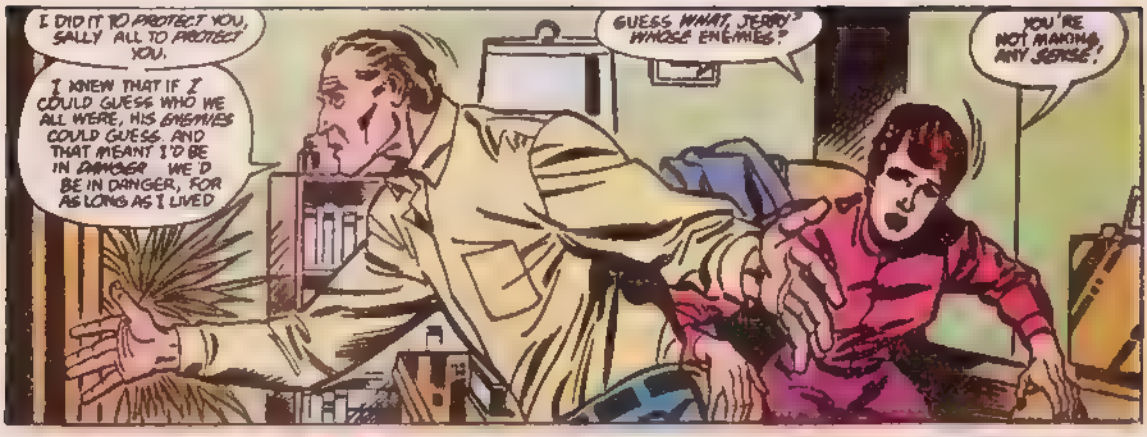
NO.
I HAVE A PLAN FOR SNARING OUR KILLER, BUT FOR IT TO WORK WE WILL NEED TO BE DISCREET
IF I'M RIGHT, YOU MEN CAN PROTECT FOUR OF THE POSSIBLE VICTIMS WHILE I GO AFTER THE FIFTH A FULL MOBILIZATION WILL ONLY SERVE TO ALERT THE KILLER WE'RE ON TO HIM...


"IF THAT HAPPENS, I'M AFRAID WE'LL LOSE HIM FOREVER."
SEVERAL HOURS LATER.
WHERE IS IT?
WHERE'S 307.
THERE IT IS...
AND THERE HE IS
MR SHASTRI! GLAD YOU COULD MAKE IT, SIR
MR JONES.
I KNOW YOU'RE A VERY BUSY MAN, SIR I'M SO PLEASED YOU COULD TAKE A MOMENT FROM YOUR SCHEDULE
Trade Winds IMPORT AND EXPORT INC.
SINCE WE COULD AGREE TO MEET HERE, AT ONE OF MY HOLDINGS, I AM ABLE TO COMBINE MY BUSINESS WITH YOURS THEREFORE I AM SATISFIED
SHALL WE STEP INSIDE?


WOW, MR JONES, PERHAPS YOU WILL TELL ME WHAT THIS IS ALL ABOUT? YOUR COMMUNICATION WITH MY DELHI OFFICE WAS MOST MYSTERIOUS
I REALIZE THAT, SIR
IT WAS NECESSARY THAT I NOT REVEAL ALL THE DETAILS IN MY CABLE YOU SEE.
I AM THE BATMAN AND I NEED YOUR HELP
YOU ARE THE BATMAN?
FORGIVE ME MR JONES BUT YOU DO NOT SEEM TO POSSESS THE NECESSARY PHYSIQUE.
I AM A MASTER OF DISGUISE, SIR
PERHAPS IT WOULD HELP YOU BELIEVE ME - I REMIND YOU OF THE YOUNG AMERICAN WITH WHOM YOU ONCE SHARED YOUR GREAT KNOWLEDGE OF CAPOEIRA
IT IS TRUE I HAVE BEEN ACKNOWLEDGED AS THE WORLD'S LEADING EXPERT ON THE SUBJECT OF SHAMES MR JONES EVEN AS MY BUSINESS ASSUMED WORLD DE PROPORTIONS, THIS HAS REMAINED AN ABIDING INTEREST
BUT I AM AFRAID YOU ARE MISTAKEN I HAVE NEVER TUTORED AN AMERICAN
NEVER ??
BUT I WAS SO SURE THE

DOES...DOES THAT MEAN...
DOES THAT MEAN... YOU WON'T... HELP ME?
I THINK THAT MEANS YOU'RE BEYOND HELP, STONE.
NOW, WHY DON'T YOU SURRENDER QUIETLY.
THAT VOICE!
YOU'RE NOT SHASTRI!
NO, STONE.
BUT AS YOU SAID, A MASTER OF DISGUISE.
BATMAN!
THE REAL ONE!
STONE!
SKZZKZZT
AH-GHH!!
STONE! STOP! IT'S POINTLESS TO RUN! I KNOW WHO YOU ARE!
NO YOU DON'T, BATMAN
"STONE" IS DEAD. I KILLED HIM! ALL THE TRAILS THAT LEAD TO HIM END WITH THE NAMELESS CADAVER I EXPLODED OVER DOWNTOWN GOTHAM. THE CADAVER I DRESSED AS YOU. TO MATCH THE PATTERN... TO MAKE SURE EVERYONE THOUGHT I WAS DEAD!
DON'T... TRY TO ADD YOURSELF, STONE.
NO ONE CAN VANISH SO COMPLETELY I'D NEVER BE ABLE TO FIND THEM.
I HAVE, BATMAN.
DON'T YOU SEE? THAT'S WHERE I BEGAN. THAT WAS THE CORE OF MY WHOLE PLAN.
I'VE SPENT YEARS CREATING A WHOLE NEW CASE, BATMAN, AND NOT YOU, NOR ANY OF YOUR GIMMICKS ARE EVER GOING TO UNDO US!
"...US...?"
15

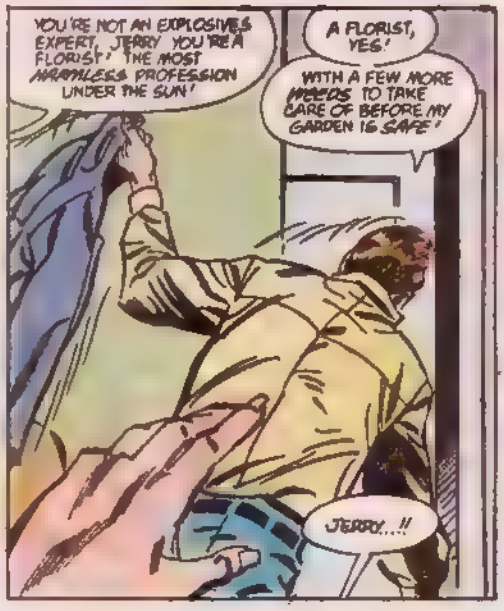
ONE HOUR LATER
BUT MASTER BRUCE, IF YOU KNOW THIS MAN STONE IS THE KILLER, WHY DON'T YOU JUST GO OUT AND PICK HIM UP?
BECAUSE HE WAS TELLING THE TRUTH, ALFRED
ALL DATA ON FREDRICK STONE ENDS WITH HIS APPARENT DEATH
BUT IF MR. STONE IS ONE OF THE MEN YOU CONTACTED, YEARS AGO, TO HELP YOU IN YOUR TRAINING...
WHY WOULD HE BE KILLING OFF ALL THE OTHERS WHO HELPED TO THAT SAME END INCLUDING HIMSELF? AND WHY WOULD BRUCE WAYNE BE ON HIS LIST OF VICTIMS?
I'M NOT SURE WHAT HIS EXACT MOTIVE IS JUST YET.
AS TO HIS INCLUSION OF BRUCE WAYNE, I SUSPECT THAT WAS A RESULT OF HIS PROCESS OF DEDUCTION IN FINDING ALL THE OTHERS
I LEARNED ABOUT EXPLOSIVES FROM STONE
HE MUST'VE READ OF MY USING A METHOD ONLY ME COULD HAVE TAUGHT ME AND FROM THAT HE REASONED OTHER EXPERTS MUST HAVE TAUGHT ME OTHER SKILLS
AS FOR BRUCE WAYNE, WELL, "ELEMENTARY, MY DEAR GAUL" ONCE DEDUCED MY IDENTITY BY LOCATING THE ONE MAN WHO WAS BUYING ALL THE THINGS BATMAN WOULD NEED
STONE COULD HAVE MADE A SIMILAR DEDUCTION PERHAPS HE DECIDED WAYNE WAS SOMEHOW FINANCING THE BATMAN
WHEN STONE WAS THROWN BY MY PRETENDING SHASTRI WAS ONE OF THE MEN WHO'D TRAINED ME, I REALIZED HE WAS WORKING ON GUESSWORK RATHER THAN DEDUCTIVE REASONING
IT'S MOST FORTUNATE YOU WERE ABLE TO CONTACT MR. SHASTRI AND TAKE HIS PLACE, SIR
LUCKILY THE HEAVY LATEX MAKEUP I NEEDED FOR MY IMPERSONATION PROTECTED ME FROM THE ELECTRIC SHOCK THAT WAS MEANT TO KILL SHASTRI
I WOULD HARDLY SAY THOSE BURNS REPRESENT AN INDICATION OF YOUR HAVING BEEN PROTECTED, MASTER BRUCE
YOU REALLY SHOULD TRY TO AVOID ANY STRENUOUS ACTIVITY FOR A FEW DAYS
STONE ISN'T LIKELY TO GIVE ME EVEN A FEW HOURS NOW NOT KNOWING THAT I KNOW WHO HE IS
"EVEN IF I DON'T HAVE A CLUE AS TO WHERE HE IS."
BUT BUT JERRY I DON'T UNDERSTAND
WHAT'S WRONG? WHAT HAPPENED AFTER YOU DROPPED ME OFF DOWN TOWN?


I DID IT TO PROTECT YOU, SALLY ALL TO PROTECT YOU.
I KNEW THAT IF I COULD GUESS WHO WE ALL WERE, HIS ENEMIES COULD GUESS. AND THAT MEANT I'D BE IN DANGER WE'D BE IN DANGER, FOR AS LONG AS I LIVED
GUESS WHAT, JERRY? WHOSE ENEMIES?
YOU'RE NOT MAKING ANY SENSE!

I KNEW HE COULD ONLY HAVE LEARNED THE TRIPLE INSERT MANOEUVER FROM ME, DON'T YOU SEE?
THAT'S WHEN I GUESSED HE'D LEARNED ALL HIS OTHER SKILLS FROM OTHER PEOPLE, OTHER EXPERTS.
AND THE MOMENT I REALIZED THAT, I KNEW SOMEONE ELSE MIGHT MAKE THE SAME GUESS. THE JOKER, MAYBE TWO-FACE THE PENGUIN THEY'RE ALL HOMICIDAL MANIACS. THEY'D THINK NOTHING OF KILLING US, KILLING ME TO GET TO HIM.

THE BATMAN!
JERRY, YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT THE BATMAN! HIS ENEMIES. BUT WHY WOULD HIS ENEMIES TRY TO HURT YOU? TRY TO KILL YOU?
"OR ME?"
BECAUSE I HELPED HIM! HAVEN'T YOU BEEN LISTENING?!
I TAUGHT HIM EVERYTHING I KNOW ABOUT EXPLOSIVES. EVERYTHING INCLUDING THE TRIPLE INSERT. I ONLY EVER TAUGHT THAT TO ONE OTHER MAN. AND THAT MAN HAS TO BE THE BATMAN.

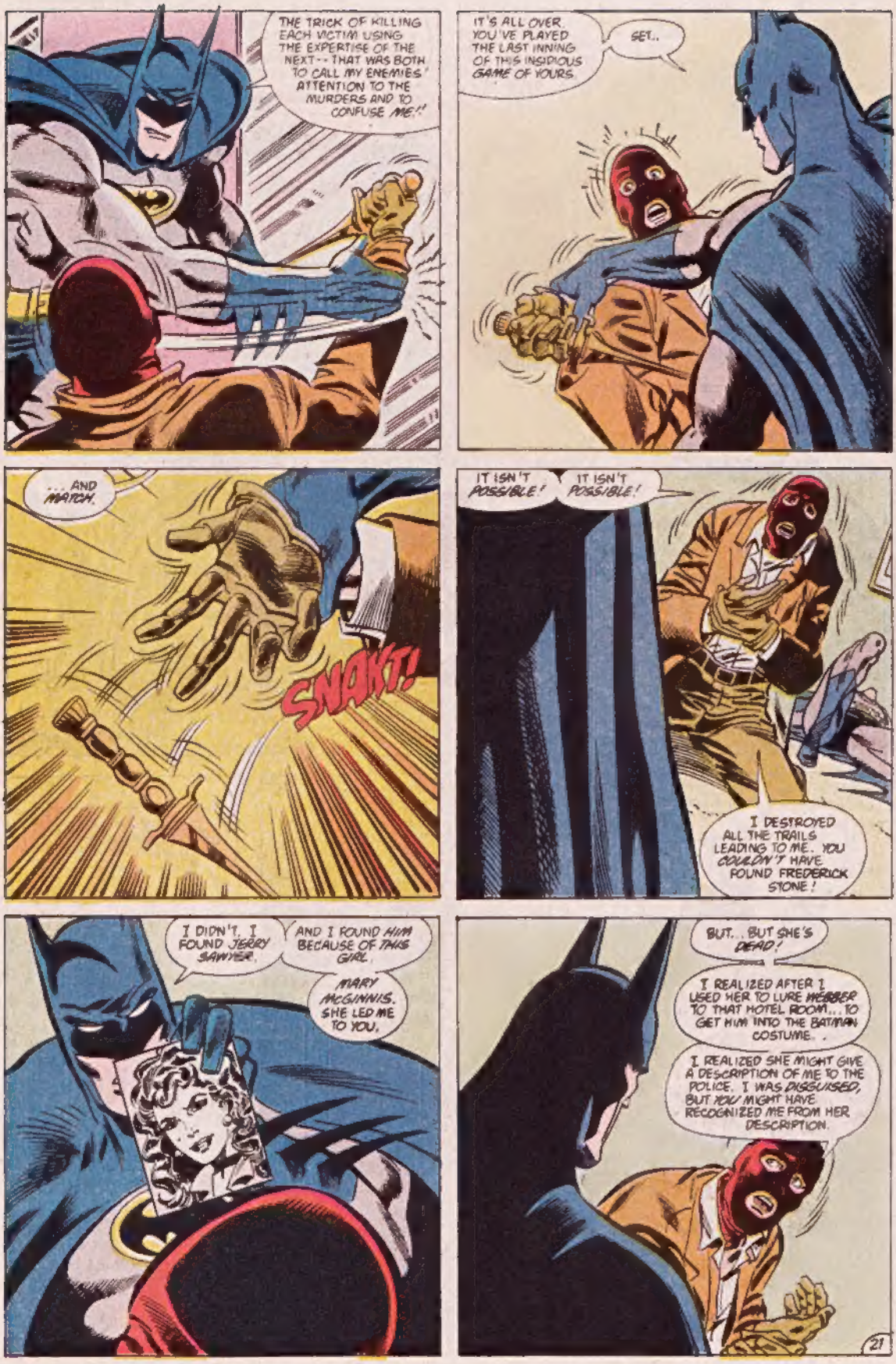
ONCE I GUESSED THAT IT WAS EASY TO FIND THE OTHERS. I KNEW EXACTLY WHEN I'D ADDED MY PART TO HIS TRAINING, YOU SEE. SO I KNEW WHEN IT WAS HE WOULD HAVE BEEN GATHERING ALL THE INFORMATION THAT MADE HIM THE BATMAN
I MADE MYSELF A LIST OF ALL THE BATMAN'S SKILLS. ALL THE THINGS I'D READ ABOUT. SEEN ON TV. I STUDIED. LEARNED A TINY AMOUNT OF EACH OF THOSE SKILLS
THEN I SOUGHT OUT THE NAMES OF THE MEN WHO COULD HAVE ADDED THEIR PART OF HIS TRAINING, AS I DID MINE.
BUT... YOUR PART? EXPLOSIVES?

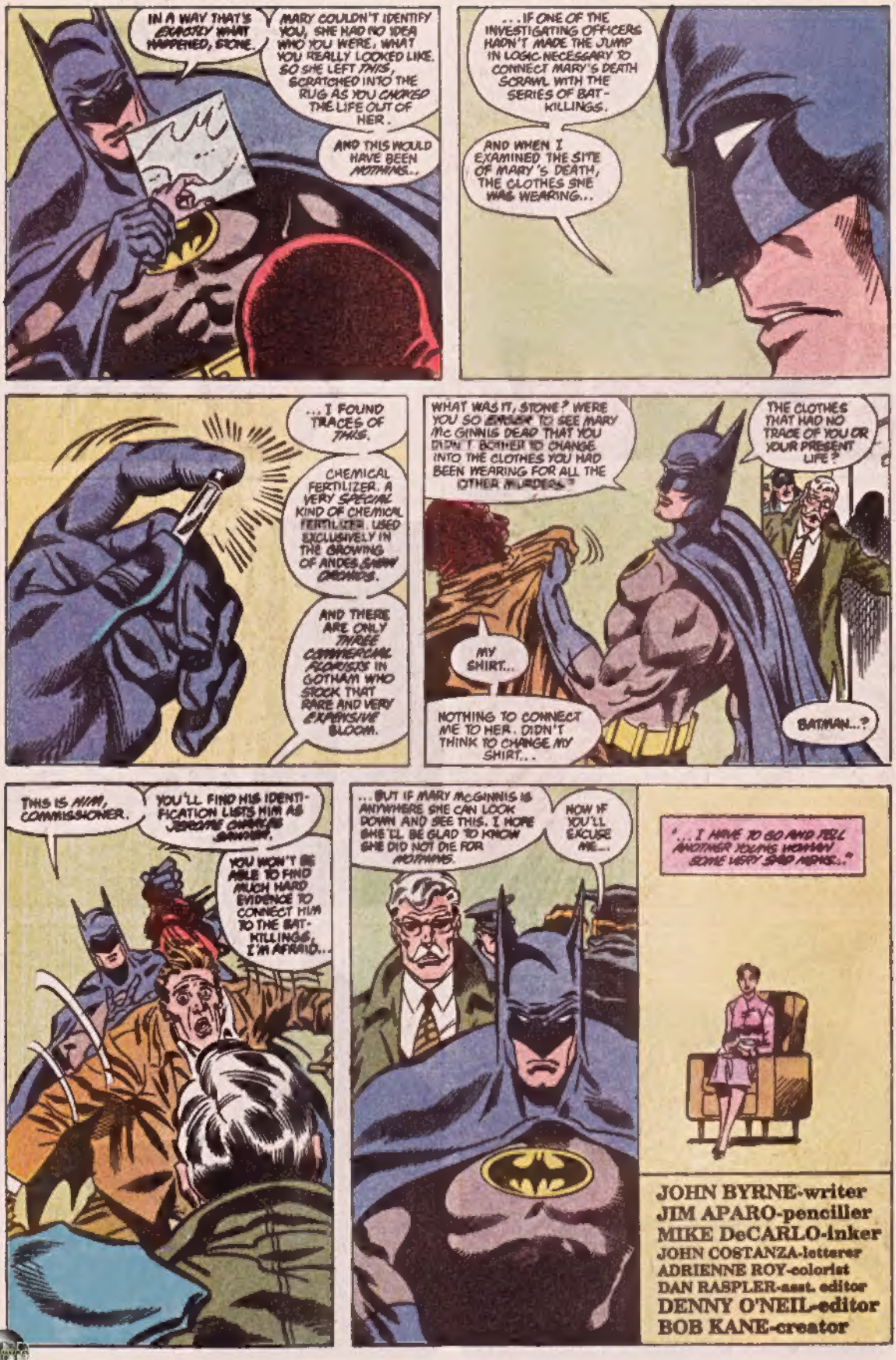

YOU'RE NOT AN EXPLOSIVES EXPERT, JERRY. YOU'RE A FLORIST! THE MOST HARMLESS PROFESSION UNDER THE SUN!
A FLORIST, YES!
WITH A FEW MORE WEEDS TO TAKE CARE OF BEFORE MY GARDEN IS SAFE!
JERRY...!!

WAIT HERE, MY DARLING!
YOU'LL BE SAFE HERE
IT'S HIM ALL RIGHT STONE HIDING IN PLAIN SIGHT UNDER AN ASSUMED NAME, A MANUFACTURED IDENTITY.
JERRY, PLEASE
NO...
DON'T WORRY, MISS. I'LL STOP HIM
OH OH M-MY G-GOD.
DON'T BE AFRAID.
BUT I WOULD SUGGEST YOU LEAVE HERE IF YOU STAY NOW YOU WILL ONLY INCRIMINATE YOUR SELF
TWENTY MINUTES LATER, THE BRIARCLIFFE ARMS..
I MUST ACT QUICKLY IF THE BATMAN KNOWS WHO I AM HE WILL SURELY ALSO KNOW WHO I'M AFTER.
BUT THERE ARE MORE THAN ONE LEFT TO KILL HE WILL NOT KNOW WHO IS TO BE NEXT
ONLY I KNOW THAT
AND WHATEVER ELSE HIS SKILLS MIGHT BE, THE BATMAN IS NOT A MINDREADER!
MR CAMPBELL?
ROOM SERVICE..
KNOX KNOX

ROOM SERVICE?
I DIDN'T ORDER ANY
SHUT UP!
I DON'T HAVE THE TIME FOR FINESSE NO TIME FOR GAMES.
WHOOIE!!
YOU'RE GOING TO DIE, CAMPBELL THAT'S WHY YOU CAME TO GOTHAM, ALTHOUGH YOU HAD NO IDEA WHEN YOU RESPONDED TO MY INVITATION
AND BEFORE YOU DIE YOU'RE GOING TO PUT THIS ON!
WHAT IN THE NAME OF...??
THE COSTUME IS MY SIGNATURE, CAMPBELL THE MARK I CHOSE TO LET THE BATMAN'S ENEMIES KNOW WHY THIS WAS BEING DONE WHY THESE MEN WERE DYING.
YOU HAVE TO DIE SO I CAN LIVE.
PUT IT ON--
SOON--
ALL RIGHT! I'M WEARING THE WRETCHED THING! NOW, WHAT DO YOU MEAN TO DO?
YOU SEE THIS DAGGER, CAMPBELL? IT'S AN EXACT COPY OF A CEREMONIAL DAGGER USED BY THE CHAWALDRA PEOPLES OF NORTHERN TIBET.
IT USED TO BE USED IN HUMAN SACRIFICES, BUT THEY'VE BECOME MORE CIVILIZED IN THE PAST FEW YEARS
PLEASE. NO. I HAVE A WIFE.
THERE ARE PROBABLY ONLY TWO AMERICANS WHO WOULD RECOGNIZE THIS DAGGER ON SIGHT, CAMPBELL, MY NEXT VICTIM, AND--
AND--ME!

YES, STONE ... OR WOULD YOU PREFER "SANTEN"? YOU WENT TO A LOT OF TROUBLE TO CREATE THAT IDENTITY.
BUT IT WON'T SERVE YOU NOW. YOUR SO-CALLED SIGNATURE WAS MEANT TO FOOL MY ENEMIES INTO THINKING ALL THE MEN WHO TRAINED ME WERE DEAD WHEN CORPSES WEARING MY COSTUME STOPPED TURNING UP.
YOU WANTED EVERYONE THINKING YOU WERE GONE. NO LONGER ANY SORT OF TARGET FOR VENGEANCE BY MY ENEMIES.


THE TRICK OF KILLING EACH VICTIM USING THE EXPERTISE OF THE NEXT-- THAT WAS BOTH TO CALL MY ENEMIES' ATTENTION TO THE MURDERS AND TO CONFUSE ME!!
IT'S ALL OVER. YOU'VE PLAYED THE LAST INNING OF THIS INSIDIOUS GAME OF YOURS.
SET..
...AND MATCH.
SNAKT!
IT ISN'T POSSIBLE!
IT ISN'T POSSIBLE!
I DESTROYED ALL THE TRAILS LEADING TO ME. YOU COULDN'T HAVE FOUND FREDERICK STONE!
I DIDN'T. I FOUND JERRY SAWYER.
AND I FOUND HIM BECAUSE OF THIS GIRL.
MARY MCGINNIS. SHE LED ME TO YOU.
BUT.. BUT SHE'S DEAD!
I REALIZED AFTER I USED HER TO LURE HERRER TO THAT HOTEL ROOM... TO GET HIM INTO THE BATMAN COSTUME..
I REALIZED SHE MIGHT GIVE A DESCRIPTION OF ME TO THE POLICE. I WAS DISGUISED, BUT YOU MIGHT HAVE RECOGNIZED ME FROM HER DESCRIPTION.
21


IN A WAY THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT HAPPENED, STONE.
MARY COULDN'T IDENTIFY YOU, SHE HAD NO IDEA WHO YOU WERE. WHAT YOU REALLY LOOKED LIKE. SO SHE LEFT THIS, SCRATCHED INTO THE RUG AS YOU CHOKED THE LIFE OUT OF HER.
AND THIS WOULD HAVE BEEN NOTHING...
...IF ONE OF THE INVESTIGATING OFFICERS HADN'T MADE THE JUMP IN LOGIC NECESSARY TO CONNECT MARY'S DEATH SCRAWL WITH THE SERIES OF BAT-KILLINGS.
AND WHEN I EXAMINED THE SITE OF MARY'S DEATH, THE CLOTHES SHE WAS WEARING...
...I FOUND TRACES OF THIS.
CHEMICAL FERTILIZER. A VERY SPECIAL KIND OF CHEMICAL FERTILIZER. USED EXCLUSIVELY IN THE GROWING OF ANDES SNOW ORCHIDS.
AND THERE ARE ONLY THREE COMMERCIAL GROWERS IN GOTHAM WHO STOCK THAT RARE AND VERY EXPENSIVE BLOOM.
WHAT WAS IT, STONE? WERE YOU SO ENRAGED TO SEE MARY Mc GINNIS DEAD THAT YOU DIDN'T BOTHER TO CHANGE INTO THE CLOTHES YOU HAD BEEN WEARING FOR ALL THE OTHER MURDERS?
THE CLOTHES THAT HAD NO TRACE OF YOU OR YOUR PRESENT LIFE?
MY SHIRT...
NOTHING TO CONNECT ME TO HER. DIDN'T THINK TO CHANGE MY SHIRT...
BATMAN...?
THIS IS HIM, COMMISSIONER.
YOU'LL FIND HIS IDENTIFICATION LISTS HIM AS JEROME CHANDLER SAWYER.
YOU WON'T BE ABLE TO FIND MUCH HARD EVIDENCE TO CONNECT HIM TO THE BAT-KILLINGS, I'M AFRAID...
...BUT IF MARY McGINNIS IS ANYWHERE SHE CAN LOOK DOWN AND SEE THIS, I HOPE SHE'LL BE GLAD TO KNOW SHE DID NOT DIE FOR NOTHING.
NOW IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME...
"...I HAVE TO GO AND TELL ANOTHER YOUNG WOMAN SOME VERY SAD NEWS..."
JOHN BYRNE-writer
JIM APARO-penciller
MIKE DeCARLO-inker
JOHN COSTANZA-letterer
ADRIENNE ROY-colorist
DAN RASPLER-asst. editor
DENNY O'NEIL-editor
BOB KANE-creator

BAT-SIGNALS

DC COMICS INC.
666 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10103

JENETTE KAHN President and Publisher
DICK GIORDANO V.P.-Executive Editor
DENNIS O'NEIL Editor
DAN RASPLER Asst. Editor
RICHARD BRUNING Art Director
TERRI CUNNINGHAM Mgr.-Editorial Admin.
PAT BASTIENNE Mgr.-Editorial Coordinator
BOB ROZAKIS Production Director
PAUL LEVITZ Executive V.P.
JOE ORLANDO V.P.-Creative Director
BRUCE BRISTOW V.P.-Sales & Marketing
MATT RAGONE Circulation Director
PAT CALDON Controller

L-3785

Dear Denny and Daniel,

After reading BATMAN #432, I must express my gratitude to all of you, and especially to James Owsley, for presenting "Dead Letter Office," a story of the kind I thought I might never see again following the death of Robin.

All the justification I had read for killing Jason Todd boiled down to motivating Batman to become a grimmer, more inhuman character, a figure to inspire fear in all, innocent and guilty. This was a scenario I dreaded. I have always cherished the images of Batman as friend to the good citizens of Gotham while striking terror into the hearts of those choosing to break the law. You can imagine my pleasure upon reading "Dead Letter Office," which showed a thoroughly human and humane caped crusader (literally). Owsley, in fact, used the death of Robin to strengthen the compassion of Batman and I hope Jim Starlin will bear this in mind when he returns to writing the series.

I also enjoyed the portrayal of Batman's relationship with Max Kelly throughout the story. I was impressed with the way Batman anticipated Max's reactions to his sudden and unexplained appearances in her apartment, and with the way he proceeded to work with her. In the right kind of story, I think Max is a character worth using again. Also, I think James showed he has a good handle on the relationship between Batman and Gordon. The exchanges between them were nicely written, and I'll even forgive Jim for using that old "I hate it when he does that" line.

All in all, a very satisfying tale, nicely enhanced by pleasing Aparo/DeCarlo art. Jim rarely lets me down on Batman, though I would like to see him do pencils *and* inks again, as he did in the *Brave and Bold* days. Consider that an earnest entreaty.

All the best,
Dale Coe
Warrington, Cheshire
England

* * * * *

Dear Denny,

I have just finished reading BATMAN #432, "Dead Letter Office," and for the first time I have nearly accepted Jason Todd's death. Maybe I'm stupid, but when Max asked the Dark Knight, "Do you have any *idea* of what it feels like to lose your own *son* ...?" my first thought was that, "No, but I lost my parents," would be Batman's response. When Batman looks at Jason's letter on the final page, however, I sat back and closed my eyes and mourned Jason Todd. How else can I put it? You guys hit home!

Congratulations to all for the most human story in some time.

Lee Barnett
London, England

Well, sounds like they appreciate a little creative pathos in England. In truth, we felt as well that it was important for it to be clear that no matter what his public image, Batman's loss of Jason had an effect that was ultimately humanizing. We're glad you noticed.

And keep reading for further ramifications.

* * * * *

Dear Dan and Denny,

"Get dressed, Max. I need you."

A simple statement, to be sure, but one that lingered long after I'd finished BATMAN #432. In spite of what most readers may think, Batman *needs* some sort of companionship, even if he does work best on his own.

It looks to me like Batman and Maxine'd be perfect for each other, if only because their first meeting was so endearing. They both work for the same goals and use essentially the same methods; in fact, Max almost could've *been* Batman (Batwoman?), if Bruce hadn't beaten her to it, and if Max could "stomach the outfit."

In any case, I hope we'll be seeing more of Max. Considering that he actually let her into the Batcave, I have a feeling we will.

Just one question, off the subject: Does Jim Gordon know that Bruce Wayne is Batman? If not, why was he at Jason Todd's funeral?

Sincerely,
Ed "Wildseid" Casey
Tallahassee, FL

Ed. Commissioner Gordon doesn't know who Batman is. He went to Jason's funeral out of respect for his friend Bruce Wayne.

* * * * *

Dear Bat-Signals,

BATMAN #432 was Batman the way it oughtta be! I really like Max. She was not your typical P.I. She played off Batman very well. I'd really like to see more of her.

It was also nice to see Batman play detective again, instead of the avenging geek he's been since Jason died. A tip of the pointy-eared cowl to Jim Owsley for breaking the ice. And as always, Jim Aparo's art was superb. Don't let this man go! In the future, I would love to see Batman and Max take on a real threat, like the Scarecrow.

Sincerely,
Mark Goodman
Jericho, NY

* * * * *

Dear Dan and Denny,

As a fan of the hard-boiled mystery genre, I was more than pleased to see the introduction of a new private detective character. Max Kelly manages to combine the best of the Sam Spade school and the best of '80s cool.

James Owsley is certainly an excellent choice to pick up the reins; in fact, he seems more at home on the streets of Gotham than he has in the galactic sprawl with Green Lantern. Jim Aparo remains one of my favorite Batman artists of all time. It amazes me that he can still do it so well after all these years.

Keep up the good work, gentlemen.

Andrew Karl
White Plains, NY

* * * * *

Dear Dan,

Batman's fervent search for the missing boy in BATMAN #432 captured his compulsive-obsessive tendencies well, and gave the reader some understanding of the guilt and repercussions he is facing after Jason Todd's death. This all is welcome and appreciated.

Over in the Superman titles, we see the Man of Steel wrestling with his conscience over moral choices he made. Rather than cope with them, he runs away, banishing himself into space. Batman is handling his guilt and grief differently. It appears his character is stronger, more vigilant, as he fights himself, his feelings, as he continues his self-appointed role. Through saving the boy, he redeems a part of himself, knowing that even though Jason is dead, his memory serves as a catalyst to rescue others who may not have had the opportunities afforded him. By saving one child, Batman saves his soul. Fine work, Mr. Owsley!

Mahalo,
Mark Lucas
San Francisco, CA

* * * * *

Dear Denny and Dan,

I could easily learn to live with the creative team of Owsley, Aparo, and

DeCarlo on Batman. Issue #432 was another bit of proof that James Owsley has finally made it big. After years of being a consistently good writer who never got much attention, Mr. Owsley is really making a name for himself now that he's writing the character that every writer hopes to get a crack at someday, myself included. The focus on Batman's detective abilities is a refreshing change of pace from the usual thug-punching creature-of-the-night scenario.

I am looking forward to the John Byrne three-parter with a great deal of enthusiasm, but I hope the Owsley, Aparo, DeCarlo team returns to chronicle the dark knight's adventures on a regular basis.

Until next time,
Robert Lugibihl
Fountain Valley, CA

• • • • •

Dear Denny,

Man, I could get used to these Owsley/Aparo stories. As with the previous issue, "Dead Letter Office" was yet another superb Batman story, strong in all the elements that have made the Darknight Detective the enduring literary figure that he is: daring escapes, unsolved mysteries, amazing feats of physical prowess, dazzling displays of detection and intelligence, and of course, Batman scaring the bejeezus out of folk. I was in ecstasy for the entire 22 pages.

I was also quite taken with the character of Maxine Kelly. She reminded me quite a bit of Kinsey Millhone, the female p.i. from the superb Sue Grafton novels. (And when you look at it, Kinsey's initials are K.M., while Max's are M.K. Coincidence, Mr. Owsley, or are you a Grafton fan, too?)

Please, Denny, convince Messrs. Owsley and Aparo that they should stay with this title. They are the perfect counterpoint to all the weirdness that is going on over in "Detective." Also, keep Max around, will you? Batman could use her sarcasm to keep things in perspective.

Thanks for listening,
Sean Twist
London, Ontario

Well, gang, it seems old Maxie was a hit with you. We've got one more letter that was a hit with us, to wit:

• • • • •

Hey, Denny and Dan,

I just finished BATMAN #432 and enjoyed it as I do most of them.

Afterward, I began thinking it would be great if there really were superheroes.

Like an Aquaman patrolling our oceans.

Or a Superman protecting our planet.

Maybe even a whole band of gallant super-heroes to guard our Galaxy.

Yeah, it'd sure be great.

Oh well, at least the Batman's real!

Terry
Jackson, MS

Thank you, Terry, whoever you are.

NEXT ISSUE: It's bi-weekly for the next two months, both in BATMAN and in DETECTIVE COMICS. In DETECTIVE #604-607 we give you "The Mudpack," the slimiest bunch of Batman villains ever to team up against the Caped Crusader. Numbers 604 and 607 of 'TEC will contain fully-painted mini-posters of Batman by Norm Breyfogle, so I'm sure you won't miss a single issue.

Oh yes. And here in BATMAN? What's happening here over the next four issues, now that the Dark Night Detective is at the end of his rope?

BATMAN: YEAR THREE.

Be there.

From the Den

Snow came and went like a reluctant visitor paying a formal call this past winter. On the ground for a day, and then gone.

There is a hole in the ozone layer that would not repair itself for 300 years if we stopped spewing chemicals into the atmosphere today.

We're losing hundreds of acres of forest a week, mostly to lumbermen's axes.

And a few days ago, a man who should have been piloting a tanker wasn't, and so the ship floundered and spilled 10,000,000 gallons of oil into the sea, polluting 600 square miles.

The ozone layer protects us from the sun's hard radiation. Forests and oceans provide the oxygen we breathe.

I wonder if there's any connection between our almost-snowless winter and what we're doing to the global environment. I wonder if the dry winter isn't the first and mildest of many symptoms to come.

And I wonder why we keep electing people who refuse to acknowledge that the damage being done to the planet might be a problem.

Occasionally I think about these matters, and when I do, I feel I have to say something.

DENNY